

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 001793

SIPDIS

WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
DEPT FOR DS/IP/WHA  
DS/DSS/ITA  
DSERCC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITIAN STUDENT MOVEMENT DIVIDED BUT YOUTH  
GENERALLY SUPPORT TRANSITION

REF: 04 PAP 244

1. (U) Summary: In the year since Aristide's departure, university student groups and other youth-oriented organizations have shifted their focus from grassroots political activism (the "shock-troops" of the anti-Aristide movement - reftel) and returned for the most part to their founding principles -- academic reforms, employment, and socio-economic development. The transition/election process has also afforded an opportunity for student and youth organizations to broaden their portfolio to include civic education, national dialogue and support for the political process. Student groups, once courageous and united in their opposition to Aristide, are now divided -- and fearful -- and represent little threat to the IGOH, despite their dissatisfaction with it (see septel summary of the divided student movement). Youth groups in general are bitter that their efforts to rid Haiti of Aristide have gone unrewarded, and they bristle at being marginalized from the transition process. Post is seeking to engage and support those groups that seek to play a peaceful role in political and social development. End summary.

Student support strong for elections; weak for the IGOH  
-----

2. (SBU) Students at first praised the transparency of the IGOH but soon began to criticize the lack of tangible results and the absence of any engagement with the youth movement. Students believe that they were responsible for bringing down Aristide and installing the IGOH and begrudge the IGOH for ignoring them over the course of the last year. They long for a consultative role on issues and are frustrated that they have not received any benefits from the IGOH that they believe they brought to power. They often say, though with little conviction, that they could "rise again" at any moment if the IGOH does not respond to their requests for inclusion.

3. (SBU) The IGOH's loss of credibility among the students has damaged student faith in elections as well. One ex-leader of the CdC told Poloff that the IGOH had proven itself incapable of organizing anything, and it was only the international community that gave Haiti an "appearance of a State" and kept the bandits from taking power. Others claim the lack of any "new blood" among the politicians has dampened student enthusiasm. Above all, students are resentful that they have not been included in elections preparations efforts, and say they are uniquely qualified, uncommonly energetic, and ideally placed to help the CEP and the international community to implement the registration, civic education and voting process, if only the IGOH and the UN would let them play a role.

Students divided, less mobilized  
-----

4. (SBU) There were few instances in the past year where students have taken to the streets in a show of force. For the most part, students have the same complaints regarding the IGOH as the population at large (all talk and no action, lack of transparency and inclusion, inept and ineffective) but they are more emotional in their hostility. But students are more divided -- by ideology and interests -- than before and this discord has hindered action. Many students simply want to get a job or get out of the country, while their leaders seek to join Haiti's insular political class. Leaders often inflate scandals and spark crises in order to attract press and enter the political conscience. Many old student leaders try to prevent new leaders from emerging, and rumors are rife that the IGOH (and specifically Youri Latortue) is building an "intelligence cell" within the student movement for political ends.

5. (SBU) In this estranged environment, most student displays of force have been confused, small-scale rallies focused on narrow student interests and/or were staged to enhance the political image of student leaders: a sit-in at the Primature

that mobilized no more than 50 backers of Saintilus; a hunger strike at the Faculty of Business that mixed its protest over the expulsion of a dozen students with a call for the overthrow of the IGOH; or a shouting match between private-sector backed GRAFNEH (see septel for group descriptions) and the more radical Faculty of Social Sciences on the security situation and role of MINUSTAH. To date, the primary student and youth groups have voiced their displeasure with the IGOH mostly in private, and at this stage are basically resigned to the idea of replacing the government via fall elections.

#### Non-student youth organizations

16. (SBU) The disruption of Aristide's patronage system that produced bands of "chimere" youth in targeted neighborhoods had two effects. Without viable alternatives, many of those who benefited from the handouts reconstituted themselves as the soldiers of the organized criminal gangs bent on destabilizing the country and living off the spoils of lawlessness. On the other hand, according to one organization leader, community groups that were passed over by Aristide's focus on loyalty rather than ideas, were liberated by the dissolution of the patronage system to pursue more socio-economic -- rather than political -- goals. Desperate to play a role in the transition process, these groups claim an existent network on the ground they say is perfectly placed to assist the IGOH and the international community with anything from disarmament talks to elections registration to trash cleanup.

17. (SBU) As with students, however, many of these organizations complain the IGOH and international donors have ignored their offers, and assert persuasively that initiatives from dialogue to disarmament have failed because the government and the UN have attempted to impose solutions from above without engaging the population to help solve Haiti's problems themselves. They also bemoan Haiti's "antiquated" political class and argue that elections would be meaningless without a new cadre of modern politicians. Although almost unanimous in their reproach of the IGOH (and often MINUSTAH) and skepticism of political parties, they retain a sense of hope and interest in elections.

18. (SBU) During a roundtable with the Ambassador on June 7, group leaders from the poorer neighborhoods appealed to the international community (and the United States in particular) to intervene in the neighborhoods and "provide youth with alternatives to joining gangs." Jean Enock Joseph from Collectif des Notables de Cite Soleil (CONOCS) called for an aggressive, organized social policy to fight against misery and lawlessness, saying residents were "desperate, but not hopeless." Belgarde Berton, who represents over 300 popular organizations in the Group of 184, called for the international community to work together with local organizations to ensure investment goes to the people who need it, rather than to a clique of local interests. Carlot Paulemon, leader of Rassemblement Nationale des Citoyens Organises pour le Developpement d'Haiti (RANCODHA), an umbrella organization of neighborhood organizations, pointed to the recent success of a June 4th Community Forum in Cite Soleil as a model of "bottom-up" reconciliation unmatched by IGOH promises of a grand National Dialogue. (Note: the Community Forum was funded in part by USAID via a grant from NDI. End note). The groups sent a clear demand for more micro-oriented projects and social reintegration on a local scale.

#### Comment

19. (SBU) Divided and simply scared off the streets by the threat of chimere revenge, student groups are unlikely to mobilize in a mass, public display of anger against the IGOH. Most have by now accepted the inevitability of elections and are juggling bids from political parties for support. Without a new political personality to motivate them, the diverse groups are likely to remain as splintered politically as the numerous political parties themselves. It is unfortunate, however, that student energy could not be harnessed for good, as their support for elections and eagerness to play a role have the potential to stimulate greater public enthusiasm. A unified and public youth movement for elections and against violence would help grant the transition process the public relations momentum it needs to overcome the public's obsession with security concerns.

110. (SBU) We have already pointed to the need to introduce flexible, quick-start development projects in Bel Air and Cite Soleil if and when the security environment permits it. Post is making a considerable effort to engage and support student and other peaceful, non-political "base movements" in these areas to provide a hopeful alternative to the gangs that dominate their neighborhoods. But much more could, and

should, be done. We stand ready to work both independently  
and in cooperation with others to fulfill our pledge if  
MINUSTAH fulfills theirs to pacify the slums.

GRIFFITHS